



Jade & Pounamu

Pounamu — Nephrite Jade, Serpentine and Bowenite



Pounamu is the Maori word for Jade and a similar, softer stone called Bowenite, a type of Serpentine. It varies greatly in colour, clarity and texture and, while it has been referred to as Greenstone, a lot of it is NOT green! NZ Nephrite Jade can be green, black, white and even nearly blue with a great range of inclusions. With this variety comes up to 200 names

given by the Maori although only about 20 are commonly used. It is this variation that is one of the best ways to distinguish genuine Pounamu from imported stone arriving from China, British Columbia and Russia. If you can't see a good variety in the stone found at a retail outlet, the chances are most, if not all, is imported.

Nephrite Jade was used for tools and ornaments by Maori while Bowenite (*Tangiwai* or Tear

Water) was only used for jewellery due to its softness. It was worked by rubbing on sandstone with water and drilled using a centrifugal drill with obsidian, flint or quartz bits, aided by the addition of fine quartz sand and water as the hole progressed. Sandstone "files" were used for detail and polishing achieved with fine grits and eventually oil -- usually from the carver's and wearer's skin. This whole process took anywhere from weeks to years to generations depending on the purpose and significance of the piece. With such energy going into each creation, they are said to absorb that energy and become a record of what happens to its owners. It is, therefore, important that the carving "feels good" when created, purchased and passed on.

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Inanga

- named after the whitebait (small fish)
- characterised by pearly white or bluish green colour
- most highly prized of all the jades

Kahurangi

- it means treasured possession, jewel, prized
- a very clear apple green jade with very few flaws

Kawakawa

- named after the native kawakawa plant
- a darker green jade sometimes distinguished by small, dark inclusions



Totoweka

- name means blood of the weka
- green nephrite of the kawakawa variety distinguished by reddish-brown streaks

Marsden Flower

- found in the Marsden river near Hokitika
- a very pretty, often dark-green jade much prized by carvers

Arahura

- found in the Arahura River, an apple-green coloured jade

Rimu

- named after the Rimu Valley, this is a very dark-green jade